A Former Aide Talks About the President

[illegible] Americans [illegible] concerning Watergate [illegible] ter [illegible] be [illegible].

[illegible] from [illegible] with Mr. Nixon dating back [illegible] 1944 [illegible] Also [illegible] tion with [illegible] 1956 and [illegible] those [illegible] Vice President [illegible] ely based [illegible] employment [illegible] beliefs in the [illegible] integrity and [illegible] While some detractors [illegible] a lack of objectivity [illegible] of these facts, I think [illegible] a more valid [illegible] than many of the present "judges." My own personal frame of reference, built on long friendship and what I feel my association has given me in the way of insight into, and understanding, of Mr. Nixon's basic character and motivations, are therefore, the platform from which I speak.

Perhaps there is at least a partial key to an understanding of the current drama and to the question, "How could Mr. Nixon not have known?" in his instructions to me when I first entered into an employer-employee relationship in January, 1953. Mr. Nixon told me that one of my prime duties would be to "protect" him so that he would have sufficient time to study, read, think, and otherwise concentrate on the problems with which he was dealing. You will recall that President Eisenhower, even then, [illegible] the center [illegible] holding interest [illegible] world politics [illegible] time was taken up in preparation [illegible] trips and, in addition [illegible] absorbed in meetings of the Cabinet, National [illegible] Government [illegible] and other [illegible] [illegible]

believe that perhaps [illegible] to have my cake and eat it too.

However, [illegible] interpretation on the part of top staff people in a highly political situation (and politics is really people) can lead to a type of blindness and insensitivity on the part of both master and servant which can, in turn, lead to real problems. Such phrases as "the Berlin Wall" and rumors that the top staff [illegible] harder to see than the President himself, could have [illegible] because of too strict [illegible] adherence with the admonition [illegible] tect yourself," and with the consequent result of almost [illegible] double moat around the [illegible].

Such a system breeds an inordinate delegation of power. This, in turn, carries with it the seeds of its own destruction when it reposes in individuals whose experience, capacity (which is built on experience) and political instincts are limited. Other times, other places and other people, such a modus operandi might well have worked. The tragedy is that in this instance, sincere, hard-working, intelligent, dedicated, and patriotic young men were victims of a power-bred myopia which made them vulnerable to their own experience, particularly political inexperience.

These thoughts are offered by way of explanation, not absolution, as both the delegator and receiver of presidential power share in the responsibility for what happened. But the daily inferences and outright charges that Richard Nixon has lied to the American people is a cruel lie itself. In my own 30 years of friendship and intermittent association I have known a man who I think is constitutionally unable to lie, particularly about such an overriding question of morality and integrity. Frankly, this characteristic is an indicator of that which has so frustrated and antagonized that part of the media which has been so long [illegible]. Mr. Nixon gives the impression of [illegible] Fourth of July [illegible] [illegible] Some [illegible] of the press-TV [illegible] believe he is for real [illegible] and their [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

him to present a false front. The complementary character of Pat Nixon herself would, I think, be different if he were even tempted.

In addition, the man is simply too intelligent to even consider the risk of a "second-story job" on Democratic headquarters to obtain the knowledge of what went on in Larry O'Brien's office. It is completely out of character for a man who would voluntarily deny himself the Presidency when it was probably within his grasp. Here, of course, I refer to 1960 when it is reported that J. Edgar Hoover and many friends urged him to contest the election because of known [illegible] vote frauds in Illinois, Missouri and Texas. Incidentally, I can imagine no more vicious assault on the American system than that of the actual theft of ballots and perversion of the citizens' basic voting right at the ballot box itself.

Yes, I think I know "how" Watergate happened. Mr. Nixon's remoteness and that of his top staff people made the latter vulnerable to an excess of power. The tragic irony is that equal excesses of zeal and dedication to a great President (which normally are admirable qualities) were short-circuited by this fatal juxtaposition which gradually eroded the judgement of otherwise good men.

I think most Americans will applaud President Nixon for the action he did take in initiating efforts to discover the source of leaks from the innermost proceedings of the National Security Council and other high policy bodies. The nation's security demanded such action. At what point would continuing leaks undermine the delicate balances even then being achieved between Russia and China by the Nixon-Kissinger plans? Any way you cut the Ellsberg cake, this man violated the law too, and the usual double standard under which the [illegible] left operates is painfully evident. Ellsberg is a hero — but the Nixon staff men are characterized as lawbreakers. However, this final element of a properly motivated inquiry which of necessity employed justifiable and available investigative techniques of microphones and-or telephone taps, even surreptitious entry, made easy the transition to their improper use and the excesses of Watergate and the so-called "plumbers" unit.

[illegible] Mitchell [illegible]

[illegible]

Defending Nixon

[illegible] Robert L. King [illegible] his most welcome letter August 25 in defense of President [illegible]

I find it horrifying that people can be so vicious and malicious toward this great man they've elected as President of the United States. What is the matter with good old fashioned loyalty? . . .

CAROLE PLESSAS
Piedmont.

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Editor— . . . The platform from which King speaks, as a former Presidential aide, may qualify him to speak about Mr. Nixon, but I don't think it necessarily represents a more valid basis for judgment of Mr. Nixon's character and motivations. My opinion is simply that Mr. Nixon is tarred with the same brush as the other bad actors, and I agree that they are indeed "victims of an over-zealous power-bred myopia." In fact, some of the lesser characters are now in jail.

I consider some of King's statements and conclusions incongruous and downright frightening, such as the one about the President being "constitutionally unable to lie." It is obvious to me, as it is to everyone, that he has deceived and lied to the people many times, constitutionally or not. As for his assessment of Mitchell's testimony "towering above" that of the others, I say it was just plain garbage, along with the rest of it.

WILLIAM J. ROMAINE
[illegible]

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Editor—I have one question for Robert L. King . . . He states that Nixon is "constitutionally unable to lie." He continues, later, "His concept of his own mission in time, and of the Presidency itself, would make it impossible for him to present a false front."

How does King square these comments with the known fact that Mr. Nixon knew of, if indeed he did not personally order, 3630 [illegible] B-52's which dropped 100,000 tons of bombs [illegible] [illegible] publicly assuring the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Neither Congress [illegible] the money for [illegible], nor any member of the public was informed of these [illegible] raids. The money was [illegible] obtained under false pretenses. The public was [illegible] lied to. [illegible]

[illegible]
Stockton.

* * *

Editor—Thank you for printing Mr. King's letter. The ferocity with which President Nixon has been attacking the news media is far more [illegible] than Watergate. His office alone, for he is the President of the United States, entitles him to [illegible] respect . . .

[illegible]
Walnut Creek.

This appears to be part of the "Let's Get On With the Business of America and Leave Watergate to the Courts" Chorus. Never heard of Robert Robert L. King. This could have been written in the WH, of course.

Typical of campaign spokesmen, spokesmen, chairmen, politicians